



The Cactus Wren • dition

Volume LVIII, No. 4

Winter 2008-2009



Roseate Spoonbill

Maricopa Audubon Meetings & Programs Nov. 2008–March 2009

Meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of each month, September through May. Our May meeting is our Annual Banquet with a location to be announced. Please check our web site or newsletter for the location of the May 2009 banquet.

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, sales tables, refreshments and a chance to socialize with MAS members. Visitors are most welcome! Our September through April meetings are held in Dorrance Hall at the Desert Botanical Garden except December, which will be in Webster Auditorium (limited parking is accessed by taking the first right past the entrance off Galvin Parkway). The Garden is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway in Phoenix, which is approximately ½ mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. Dorrance Hall is located off the main parking lot and entry to the Garden. There will be signs directing you to the meeting. Although there is no charge

to attend our general membership meetings, the Annual Banquet does require a dinner reservation and associated cost.

A pre-meeting dinner will be held at Rolling Hills (formerly Pete's) 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue in Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) for the September through April meetings. Come and join us at 6:00 p.m. for a delicious meal (no-host), meet our guest speaker and say "howdy" to other birders. Meals average \$5.00 to \$7.00.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR 2008/2009

November 2008

NO MEETING-ELECTION NIGHT!!!

December 2, 2008

David and Diane Reesor Panama and Costa Rica at Webster Auditorium

David has been interested in photography ever since he received his first Brownie Hawkeye camera for his 10th birthday. He and Diane have been fortunate to be able to travel to some truly wonderful places. The Reesors are well known for their incredible photographs and compelling stories and are always very pleased to share their images with fellow enthusiasts. Join them in a trip to Panama and Costa Rica.

January 6, 2009

Bob Brister Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness

Please join the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) for a breathtaking journey through the famous Redrock Country of Southern Utah. Presented by SUWA's

Interregional Outreach Coordinator Bob Brister, Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness is a multi-media slide show featuring stunning images by noted wilderness photographers and narrated by Robert Redford. Come enjoy, learn, and take action to preserve some of the most unique and awe inspiring landscapes in the world!

February 3, 2009

Jim Burns Jim Burns' Arizona Birds

Cactus Wrendition writer/photographer Jim Burns will present images and stories from his book about Arizona's Special Bird Species which was published by the University of Arizona Press in March, 2008.

March 3, 2009

Doug Alexander The Birds of New Zealand

New Zealand is a country of beautiful vistas, unusual birds and other wildlife. Doug Alexander's program of a month long trip there in 2007 with wife Elaine focuses on New Zealand National Parks, wildlife and ecology. Bats are the only native mammals. The Maori Polynesians and Europeans introduced mammals and extensive farming that ravaged the island ecology. Doug is a nature photographer and a self taught naturalist. He began photographing nature at age 16, and has traveled to all the continents of the world. He has presented programs on Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica for the Maricopa Audubon Society.

NOTE: The May program will be associated with our Annual Banquet. Check our web site, newsletter, or contact a board member for location information.

Committees/Support

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480-829-8209

"Man's greatest joy is to teach the love of nature." Anon

An Investment in the Future

Bequests are an important source of support for the Maricopa Audubon Society. Your chapter has dedicated itself to the protection of the natural world through public education and advocacy for the wiser use and preservation of our land, water, air and other irreplaceable natural resources.

You can invest in the future of our natural world by making a bequest in your will to the Maricopa Audubon Society. Talk to your attorney for more information on how this can be accomplished.



Roseate Spoonbill, photographed by Jim Burns, at Gilbert Riparian Area, October, 2008 with Canon 1D body and Canon 600mm f4 lens.

From the Editor, Deva Burns

The monsoon is over, fall migration is over, and triple digit temperatures are finally over. Now is the time to look forward to fall color at Boyce Thompson Arboretum, the yard perking up with the cooler temperatures, the annual Christmas Bird Counts all over the state, and that dynamite eastern warbler that may decide the Valley looks like a good place to spend the winter. Check out the list of counts with their corresponding dates near the back of this issue. We have Walter Thurber to thank for getting this information together so early in order to make the Wrendition deadline. Please check the website for those counts who did not get back to Walter in time.

As Bob states in his conservation article, by the time you read this, the election will be over. No matter who wins, it still behooves us to understand the position a president will likely take on the environment that we all hold so dear. And, no matter who wins, in these dire economic times it will be even harder to protect our world.

Check out all the regular columns and enjoy. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you that contributed to the Wrendition throughout the past year. Without your input, there would be no newsletter. Hope to see you birding!

Maricopa County is not known for its swan population. In fact, only one swan species has been recorded in the county, and that's the American race of the Tundra Swan, formerly known as the Whistling Swan, and even that species runs from "Rare or Casual" to "Accidental" ("Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County Arizona"). So, when an e-mail report reached me that a possible Trumpeter Swan had shown up at the lake at nearby Kiwanis Park in Tempe, I hastened over there with my "Sibley's".

Since I only read my e-mail every two days or so, it was fortunate that the observer, Ron Thomas, had e-mailed the news to Janet Witzeman, also. She had spread the word, and many observers had preceded me.

I recalled that we had had swans in the past in the Valley, but only rarely. I even remembered that a pair of swans had appeared on the cover of the Roadrunner (the former name of the Cactus Wren-dition) some time ago, and that Joyce and I had gone out to see them. My recollection was correct.

A pair of Whistling Swans at 83rd Ave. and the Salt River were the cover photo birds on the May 1981 Roadrunner.

The swan was not hard to find on this relatively small and cover-free urban lake. I tried to position myself between the sun and the bird so I could study the bill color and the shape of the line where the bill attaches to the head. Size is also a major identification factor, but unless one observes a Tundra and a Trumpeter together, the size is hard to judge. I couldn't make the call, but my best guess was Tundra, and a fairly tame one at that—unphased by the paddleboaters, fishermen, skateboarders, and noisy children enjoying the sunny summer weekend afternoon.

Larry Langstaff was there with his scope, and he, too, had concluded that it was a tame (and thus uncountable) Tundra Swan, a conclusion shared by many observers ("m.ob.") as Janet Witzeman refers to them in her "Field Observations" Wren-dition column.

But here's the rest of the story as told to me by the swan's discoverer, Ron

Thomas. The swan was slow moving and at certain spots along the lake edge it couldn't manage to get out. It was also eating bread pieces thrown out to it by well-meaning folks. Ultimately it ended up in the canal at the west border of the park. Ron felt that this location left it even more exposed to people who might want to do it harm. He contacted Carl Price at East Valley Wildlife, who found someone in northern Arizona who agreed to adopt the swan. Carl came and captured the swan on his first try. Ron was pleased to learn that at East Valley Wildlife, where the swan was getting a better diet than it was getting at Kiwanis, he or she had immediately established himself or herself at the top of the pecking order with a couple of Canada Geese with whom our swan was sharing the pen.

Ron expressed concern that there might be some birders who would not agree with his approach, but I assured him that no one would disagree, and that the protection and preservation of birds was at the very heart of the Audubon Society's mission.

Treasurer's Report

State of the Chapter Financial Report for the Fiscal Year ended 5/31/08

Here is a summary of the Chapter's Income and Expenditure for the year ended 5/31/08

Income	
National Audubon dues share and incentive payments	\$6,238
Friends of Maricopa Audubon	6,561
Donations	5,845
Books & T shirt Sales	1,153
Environmental Fund of Arizona	2,948
Raffles and other fundraising	3,113
Miscellaneous	110
Total Income	\$25,968
Expenditures	
Wren-dition	\$11,614
Donations	3,550
Liability Insurance	1,615
Cost of sales stock & T shirts	1,312
Officer & Committee Expenses	725
Telephone	627
Conservation	3,341
Website	1,414
Donations	3,550
Miscellaneous	1,783
Total Expenditures	\$25,981

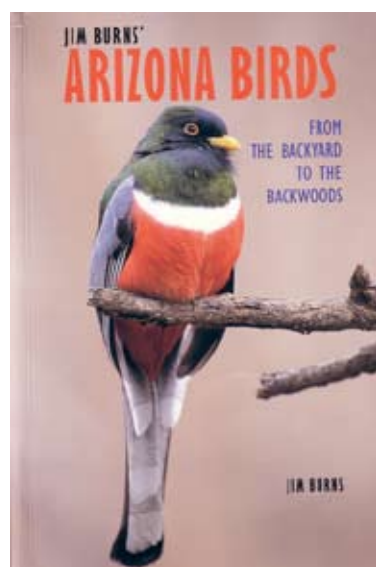
The annual CPA review is expected to be complete in November, 2008
If you have questions, please call Mark Horlings (602) 279-2238

Notes & Announcements



New Bird Publication Takes Flight--The University of Nevada Department of English announces the launch of a new creative writing publication with a focus on birds, The LBJ: Avian Life, Literary Arts. This biannual publication provides a venue for quality, new work in poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction, as well as full color art. Additionally, each issue features reviews on selected recent avian-oriented books. For more information and to subscribe go to www.literarybirdjournal.org or you can contact Nick Neely, Editor-in-Chief at 650-576-3484 or editor@literarybirdjournal.org. Subscriptions are available to individuals for \$15, or \$25 for 2 years.

Jim Burns' Arizona Birds--Jim Burns' Arizona Birds is a lively portrayal of the habits and habitats of seventy-five unique southwestern species. Burns has written much more than a field guide, site guide, or scientific survey... an original kind of birding book that is more at home on your bedside table than in your backpack... illustrated in full color by seventy-five of the author's own outstanding photographs.



You can order at <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/BOOKS/bid1948.htm> You can see more of Jim's work at www.jimburnsphotos.com

Saturday, February 28 - Sunday, March 1--FEATHERS AND FLOURS - Birding the Upper San Pedro River with Naturalist Alan Blixt and Dining with Chef Lark Beaugureau's Cooking Class at Casa de San Pedro B&B in Hereford Includes transportation by van from Tucson, upscale lodging w/ full breakfast, all fees/gratuities, gourmet dinner with wine. \$295/pers double; \$375 single. 520-577-6546 or tyrannotours@comcast.net.

Films on the environment-- If anyone is interested in films on the environment, check out www.eccfilms.com. Look for NAU's A River Reborn: The Restoration of Fossil Creek

Flagged Shorebirds Although not common in our area, please be aware of color-flagged Hudsonian Godwits, Whimbrels, and any other shorebird species which you notice have color bands. For more information check out the article in this issue. You can also contact Dave Krueper, Ass't. Nongame

Migratory Bird Coordinator, US Fish and Wildlife Service, PO Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103, (505) 248-6877 or dave.krueper@fws.gov

Unwanted catalogues Is your mailbox full of unwanted mail? Catalogue works

collaboratively with the catalog industry to embrace voluntary measures to reduce unwanted mail by honoring your mail preferences. Catalog Choice

has become a significant consumer voice in the direct mail industry. Nearly 200 catalog mailers are participating in Catalog Choice, and this number grows every day. ? Please go to <http://www.catalogchoice.org/pages/merchants> to reduce the mailing of unwanted catalogs.

Art Classes Audubon Arizona and Scottsdale Artists' School are joining forces this fall to teach beginners how to record birds the way John James Audubon did - by drawing. Three weekend classes in sketching, watercolor, and scientific illustration are offered at \$150 each. For details, go to <http://www.ScottsdaleArtSchool.org> or <http://az.audubon.org> or call Scottsdale Artists' School at 480-990-1422.

November Member Meeting--Due to the National Election this meeting is canceled. We urge you to vote. Please help make more than 25% of the registered voters in this country decide the direction our country is to take for the next 4 years.

E-mail alert system--Maricopa Audubon Society has established an e-mail alert system to notify members of upcoming events and activities. E-mail addresses were obtained from both the "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" roster and the National Audubon roster. There were several addresses that were returned, most likely because the e-mail addresses were not updated. If you would like to be included in or removed from this notification system, please let Jack Follett know at jackfollett@msn.com. The list will only be used for the stated purpose and not sold or used for any other reason.

Birding Community E-Bulletin--A monthly bulletin with rare bird sightings and other birding information. If you would like to be put on the monthly emailing list please contact either Wayne Petersen (Director of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas Program) at 718-259-2178 or wpetersen@massaudubon.org or Paul Baicich at 410-992-9736 or paul.baicich@verizon.net. They never sell the recipient list and you will receive a lot of interesting information. Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge

- Belize A new six-cabana, eco-friendly accommodation in Belize - Casa del Caballo Blanco is a 23-acre former ranch 9.5 miles from the Guatemalan border near San Ignacio. It also shelters the not-for-profit Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) (<http://www.casaavian.org/>). Its purpose is to understand and support the biodiversity of Belize that attracts and sustains over 530 species of migratory and resident birds spotted in a given year. Jodi and Vance Benté, owners of the property, also established The Alliance whose motto is: "Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them continue to sow their seeds." Their work has been undertaken in cooperation with the Government of Belize's efforts to protect critical habitat, the loss of which threatens the avian population. Guests are invited to share in the responsibilities of supporting the avian program. They can assist in nest-box building, maintenance and feeding as well as trail building and signage. A percentage of each cabana rental will be donated to the CASA center to assist with medical and other expenses related to the management of the facility. Casa also organizes day-long tours that in addition to an educational and scientific focus can include bird-watching, horseback riding, cave tubing and visiting archeological and World Heritage Sites in Belize and Guatemala. For more information, call 707-974-4942 or visit www.casacaballoblanco.com.

Book Store Selections--We now have a selection of books on birding topics for adults and children alike Remember that Friends of Maricopa Audubon members get a 10% discount and that your purchase helps to support our event, education and conservation efforts.

Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA)--Check out their website for events around the state--www.azwildlife.com.

Museum of Northern Arizona--They sponsor Venture trips that explore and discover the Colorado Plateau

in the Four Corners area. For more information contact Lisa Lamberson at 928-774-5211 x241 or llamberson@mna.mus.az.us.

Environmental Fund--Green At Work--Thousands of employees can now support Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS) in their annual fall charity campaign. The Environmental Fund for Arizona get thousands of Arizona employees involved with our group and many other conservation groups through payroll deduction workplace campaigns. Help spread the word at your office about checking off "Green" choices this fall! If your employer does not yet include environmental/conservation groups, please contact Solange Whitehead at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: efaz@efaz.org or (480) 510-5511.

Credit Card-- The American Birding Association has negotiated an agreement with US Bank to provide ABA members a distinctive US BANK VISA Card. Using your card will not only show your connection to ABA and birding but also, at no additional cost to you, provide a contribution to ABA. If interested, contact www.americanbirding. I think Audubon should offer something like this!

The Dovetail Directory (www.dovetailbirding.com): The Directory is an online catalogue of world birding tours, and our goal is to help birders locate that special birding tour, to any of 85 countries around the world. This is a free service. There are no hidden costs or surcharges. Tours are offered at the operators price. In addition to tours, the Directory also carries a comprehensive inventory of birding-related books. For your further convenience we maintain a North American, toll-free number (877) 881-1145, and someone will always happy to take your call.

Shade-grown coffee: If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry

seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit www.toucanetcoffee.com for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is www.cafebritt.com. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co--www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491.

More birding and nature festivals. www.americanbirding.org. and www.birdinghotspot.com.



Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts--T-shirt Sale: MAS T-shirts are on sale at cost. Large and XL-\$9.00, XXL- \$12.00. Shipping \$5. Lot's of colors to choose from. Contact Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614, laurienessel@gmail.com

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your submissions to the Editor--Deva Burns. Check the back page for address/e-mail. Actually, attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. If you have pictures or slides, you do need to send those to me directly. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.

Bendire's Thrasher

Jim Burns

Among the several bird families with multiple members who qualify as species special to Arizona, the family, Mimidae, is often overlooked. These are the so-called "mimic thrushes," the thrashers, whose more famously vocal relatives are Gray Catbird and Northern Mockingbird. There are eight thrasher species in the family, five of them can be observed together at the Salome Highway site west of Phoenix, and three of these five are more easily seen there than anywhere else in the country. If you're there at the right time of year.

What sets Arizona's three special thrashers apart from its other special species is that they are typically hard to find and see well even in their proper habitat. Bendire's, *Toxostoma bendirei*, partially migratory, the most widespread and the least shy, is the easiest of the three, yet was overlooked by science until 1873 when it was one of the last resident southwest species discovered. It was first collected by Charles Bendire near Tucson and sent to ornithologist Elliott Coues who realized he was looking at a new species different from the already well-known Curve-billed Thrasher.

Bendire's inhabits low saltbush deserts with scattered cactus and mesquite, grasslands with yucca, and high sagebrush deserts with scattered pinyon & juniper up to 4,000 feet. It is also found in agricultural areas where farm fields adjoin hedgerows and desert scrub. The core of its breeding range is Arizona south through Sinaloa, Mexico, but it can also be found in southern California, southern Nevada, southern Utah, and in western New Mexico.

In the northern portions of this range, Bendire's retreats southward after breeding season and is absent from September through January. Upon its return in February it is often seen teed up and singing to establish and defend territory. This is the "right time of year," February through April, for all our thrashers, with the month of March being optimal.

All our thrashers are often heard before they are seen, but to the unpracticed ear all may sound similar, so the wise birder will study the songs before setting out on a thrasher expedition. Bendire's

song is sweet and continuous with many double notes, and has been described as sounding like the bird is singing two songs at once. And as with all our thrashers, beware of that ultimate mimic thrush, the mockingbird, which occupies Bendire's habitat and readily imitates anything it hears from its melodious neighbors to your strident car alarm.

Like its fellow desert thrashers, Bendire's spends most of its time on the ground foraging beneath the desert vegetation for seeds and insects, the latter primarily beetles, grasshoppers, ants, and spiders. Because of its noticeably shorter bill, however, Bendire's is not as accomplished a digger as other thrashers and simply scratches in the dirt or turns over rocks and roots. It also eat berries and cactus fruit.

Bendire's nests are smaller and more finely constructed than those of the other desert thrashers, an outer shell of twigs lined with plant material or animal hair, low to the ground in cactus or thorny desert scrub. Three eggs per clutch, two broods per year is a typical breeding cycle. Both parents bring food to nestlings which are out and about two weeks after hatching.

No profile of Bendire's can be complete without some discussion of identification issues. In good light Bendire's is not likely to be mistaken for any of our other thrashers except Curve-billed, but because these two share habitat and breast markings, they are easily and often confused. The best comparative field mark is Bendire's shorter bill with straight lower mandible. The aptly named Curve-billed shows a much longer bill with both mandibles obviously downcurved.

Secondary distinguishing characteristics are overall size and structure, breast

spotting, and malar (mustache) stripes. Bendire's is a smaller, stockier bird similar in body shape to a Sage Thrasher, whereas Curve-billed is a longer, lankier thrasher more similar to Crissal. The head of Bendire's will appear smaller and peaked in the rear. In fresh plumage Bendire's breast spots will be smaller and more distinct, but the malar stripe will be thin and indistinct. A fresh-plumaged Curve-billed will have larger but more diffuse breast spotting, and a bolder more distinct moustache line. Remember late summer wear obscures all plumage features in both species, and beware especially of immature Curve-billeds that have relatively short bills.

Bendire's are resident at the Salome Highway "Thrasher Site" west of Phoenix, and typically two or three pairs will be singing on territory in March along the mesquite and palo verde strands which follow the washes. Curve-billeds, though they prefer denser, damper habitats and are the least likely of the five thrashers to be encountered here, do pass through in springtime, and I have seen Bendire's and Curve-billed in the same bush--a killer identification opportunity.

Before and after the Sage Thrashers have passed through on their way north from

Mexico, Bendire's is the most likely of our five desert thrashers to be seen and heard at the Salome site. Watch in March, after dawn foraging, for mated pairs to perch high in the mesquites, presumably near the nest, to soak up the early morning sun. This scenario may include the male's "whisper" song, so soft as to be undetectable outside of a few yards. Walk forward slowly and quietly--Bendire's are the tamest of the thrashers along Salome Highway--cup your ears, and watch the bird's head. When you realize the throat is pulsing even though the bill is not moving, you'll begin to hear Bendire's beautiful song. Congratulations. You've just entered the thrashers' world.

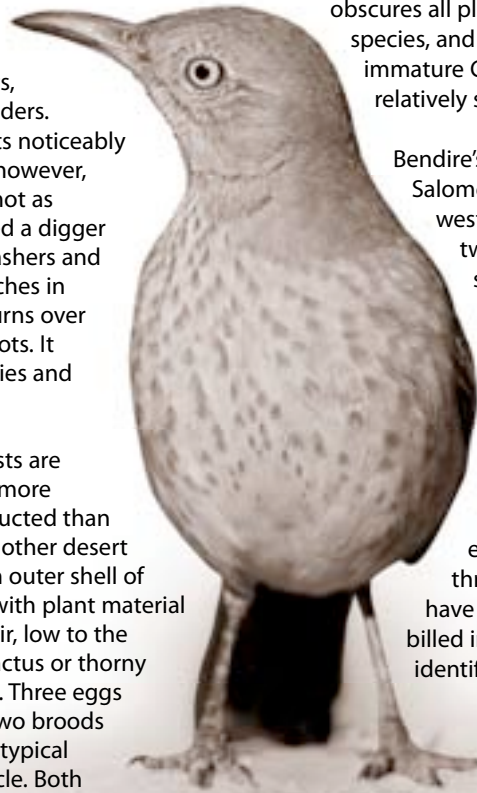


Photo by Jim Burns

Photo Quiz

Jim Burns

photo quiz

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

These three members of a fun family of birds were all photographed at the same location. That location is the best birding site in central Arizona in winter, a time of year when seven of the nine members of this tribe of birds can be seen there. Identify the birds in the photos, then identify the location, then get out to that location and see if you can find all seven in one day!



A. Good photo, easy bird



B. Good photo, difficult bird



C. Good photo, difficult bird

All photos by Jim Burns

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

November through March, 2008-09

CAR POOLING: Please make every effort to organize your own carpool; consolidate vehicles at meeting places and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers 10 cents per mile. Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.

Limit: Maximum number of participants per field trip. Please call early to make your reservations.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS 1 THROUGH

5: 1 equals very low level of exertion, short walking distance, considerable birding from vehicle and possible multiple birding stops. 5 equals very high level of difficulty with respect to exertion. Longer hiking distances are expected with possible steep trails. Trips are level 1 unless noted otherwise.

REMINDERS:

- Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.
- Wear neutral colored clothing and sturdy walking shoes.
- Bring sunscreen, sunglasses, head protection and water.
- Avoid wearing bright colors.
- Always bring your binoculars. Bring a scope if recommended.
- Submit trip and leader suggestions to the field trip chair.
- Unless stated otherwise, reservations are required.

Day Passes Required for National Forests. Many favorite spots in our National Forests now require Day Use Passes. You are responsible to acquire a day pass (\$6) in advance of field trips with an asterisk (). Passes are available by phone or mail, at FS district and ranger offices, Big 5, some Circle K's, the Shell station at Tom Darlington and Cave Creek Road and elsewhere. Visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/tp/where.shtml> for more information.

Impromptu Field Trips: Post your own outings or get notified of others planned field trips on short notice. Also get reminders of MAS field trips by email. Founded by naturalist Mike Plagens, membership is easy, free and open to those who have an interest in the flora, fauna, and ecology of Arizona. Not just a trip listing, view the website for trip reports, flora and fauna databases, maps, links to google earth including Gilbert Water ranch, and photos. Trips focus on plants, animals, mycology, geology, biology, entomology, herpetology, ecology, paleontology, birding, anthropology or microbiology. Share expenses, experiences and expertise with like-minded travelers. Proposed trips should include a brief description of the destination, ways, means, purpose, hiking difficulty, departure location, date and time. Drivers and riders will negotiate between themselves any shared expenses, but it is recommended that riders at least cover the cost of gas. Users can share via e-mail questions and experiences they have encountered while hiking through the wonders of Arizona's landscapes.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az_nature_fldtrips/

Sunday, November 23

Lost Dutchman State Park. This desert park lies at the base of Superstition Mountain near Apache Junction. This is a beautiful hike but steep in places. Resident species include Canyon Towhee, Rock and Canyon Wrens. Bring water, lunch. Scope optional. \$5 per car entry fee. Difficulty 3, 3 mile hike, steep in places. Limit 12

Leader: Laurie Nessel,
laurienessel@gmail.com or
480.968.5614 for reservations
and carpooling.

Saturday, December 6

Santa Cruz Flats: We will meet at the

s.e parking lot of the Tempe Library (s.w. corner of Southern and Rural intersection) at 6:30 am. Sunrise today will be at 7:19, and we should arrive at the Arizona City artificial lake about 7:30. We will look there for stray water birds and then drive south through the agricultural fields of the flood plains of the Santa Cruz River. Here we will look for wintering sparrows, larks, and hopefully longspurs. The sod farms and short grass fields should yield Mountain Plovers. Raptors are often throughout the flats in amazing numbers during the winter. If this is a good year, we might see 10-12 species, including Black Vulture, Harlan's Hawk, Ferruginous, Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Merlin, Peregrine, Prairie Falcon, and Crested Caracara. Sage, Crissal, Bendire's and Curve-billed Thrashers, Pyrrhuloxia, Mountain Bluebirds, and Vermilion Flycatchers can also be found here. In the Pecan Groves Lewis' Woodpeckers sometimes over winter. You will also have practice distinguishing half a dozen species of sparrows in the weedy fields. We should return to Tempe by about 3 pm. There will be little hiking, and this trip is an easy one for those who might have trouble walking. Limit of 15 participants in 4 vehicles. Please plan on car pooling.

Leader: Dave Pearson
Reservations: Scott Burge, 480.
968.5141, burge@burgenv.com for
reservations and carpooling

Saturday January 7 Camp Creek and Seven Springs: We will look for wintering birds and hope to find some of the unusual birds that were found during the Carefree Christmas bird count perhaps a Townsends Solitaire or Cassins Finch.

Leader: Russ Widner, (480)
595.2977 or rwidner@earthlink.net for
information and reservations.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

Saturday, January 10

Boyce Thompson Arboretum: We will look for winter finches, warblers and other goodies such as Brown Thrasher and Rufous-backed Robins. Bring binos, snack, lunch. Meet 8:00AM at the gate. Admission fee applies. Difficulty: 2. Done by 2:00PM. Limit 15.

Leader: Scott Burge, 480.968.5141, burge@burgenv.com for reservations

Saturday, January 24 Sunflower and Bushnell Tanks: We will visit riparian sites along the Beeline Highway to look for wintering finches, warblers and other species. Meet at Denny's Restaurant parking lot on the south side of Shea Boulevard just west of the Beeline Highway (State Route 87) in Fountain Hills at 7:30 A.M. Bring a lunch, binos, water. Limit: 15; Difficulty: 2

Leader: Scott Burge, 480.968.5141, burge@burgenv.com for reservations

Saturday, February 7

Reach 11 Recreation Area: Located off Tatum north of Union Hills, this six mile long desert and bosque natural area is the result of negotiations between the City of Phoenix and (among others) Maricopa Audubon Society. It is one of the prime municipal urban desert preserves in the Phoenix metroplex. Species expected include Phainopepla, Harris' Hawk, Roadrunner, Cooper's Hawk and other desert and desert-riparian birds, insects, mammals and flora. There's always a good chance of wintering birds and spring migrants. (Lawrence's goldfinch have been sighted here in past years). Meet 8:00AM in the Nature Trail parking lot on the east side of Tatum just north of the CAP Canal. End 11:30AM. Difficulty: 1, 3 1/2 miles easy walking.

Leader Myron Scott, (480)968-2179 gaia_3@netzero.com for reservations

Saturday, February 21 Gilbert Water Ranch: We will look for wintering waterfowl and other species. The 7 acres of water recharge basins ringed with easy, dirt trails is a bird magnet and always has some surprises. Bring binoculars, water, snack. Meet 8:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada south of the east parking lot. GWR is at the southeast corner of Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. in Gilbert, just east of the public library. Done by noon or 1:00. No limit. Bring binos, water, snack, scope (optional).

Leader: Richard Kaiser, 602-276-3312 or rkaiserinaz@aol.com for reservations

Saturday, February 28

Buckeye LeConte's Thrasher Site: Traditionally the most reliable spot for LeConte's Thrasher in the Phoenix area, along with Sage, Crissal and Curved-Billed Thrashers and probably some lingering Sage Sparrows. Black-Throated Sparrows and Black-Tailed Gnatcatchers are probable, along with other desert species. We will keep an eye out for raptors (Ferruginous and Harris Hawks are possible). The terrain is flat low desert, trailless but easy walking. Optional extension of birding day to nearby desert and/or riparian sites. Bring water and scope (optional), lunch if you're interested in the possible extended trip. (There are no McDonald's out there.) Sunscreen or a hat and long-sleeves are a good idea. End around noon (with possible extension). Difficulty: 1 (2-3 mile easy walk). Meet 7:15AM at Mimi's Café (the last facilities for the trip), 1220 N. Dysart Road, Goodyear (1/2 mile north of I-10; use Exit 129).

Leader: Myron Scott (480) 968-2179 or gaia_3@netzero.com for reservations and directions to the site.

Wednesday, March 11

*Native Flowers and Plants of the East Valley: Join us for a walk in the

desert by the lower Salt River to look for wildflowers and other native plants. With staggered winter rains we should find an interesting season for flora. We will touch on identification techniques and ecology. Bring binoculars as we will be watching for typical desert birds as well (and you can use them backwards as a loupe). Limit 15. Difficulty 1. Bring snacks and water. Lunch optional.

Leader: Mel Bramley, 480.969.9893 evenings for reservations and information.

Continuing

Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens. Mondays; Oct-May 8:00A. Second Saturdays Oct-May 8:00A. Join expert birders for a morning bird walk along the Garden trails. Everyone, including first-time birders, is welcome. Wear a hat, sunscreen, and comfortable walking shoes, and bring binoculars if available. Free with admission to the garden.

Bird Walks at Sonoita Creek State Natural Area located within Patagonia Lake State Park. Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, October- April 15th. 5 mile bird hikes along both upland and riparian habitats. Patagonia Lake Road, 7 miles west of Patagonia. \$7 entry fee per vehicle. <http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/sonoitacreeksna.html> for current schedule. For information/reservations (required) call (520) 287-2791

Bird, Butterfly or Dragonfly Walks at Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Join knowledgeable guides for walks through the Arboretum, located at Highway 60 milepost #223 near the historic copper mining town of Superior, 55 miles east of Phoenix. \$7.50 admission. Check their website for current schedule, <http://cals.arizona.edu/BTA/index.html>.

Endangered Species at the Crossroads

Bob Witzeman



Southwestern Desert-Nesting Bald Eagle. This greatly threatened, unique population of Bald Eagles strives for survival at Arizona's few remaining streams and wetlands. While delisted by the current Bush Administration, conservationists including MAS have been in court in efforts to gain ESA protection for the less than 60 pairs which nest here. Ninety percent of this bird's rare desert riparian and wetlands habitats have been destroyed by various impacts and developments. Photo by Jim Burns.

Several of Nature's people I know and they know me: I feel for them a transport of cordiality.

– Emily Dickinson

By the time you read this our presidential election should be over. However, it is always important for citizens to learn the markedly different impacts our nation's presidents have upon our environment and endangered species. The League of Conservation Voters

(LCV) ranked each member of our Congress on their voting records on key environmental issues. LCV's litmus test LCV environmental criteria included congressional votes on, for example, automobile mpg standards, renewable energy, energy efficiency standards on new appliances, homes and buildings, and global warming impacts relating to coal, oil and gas, solar, wind, and nuclear energy.

The McCain/Obama voting

differences were striking. McCain in the last (2007) Congress skipped (declined or refused to vote) on all 15 of the LCV litmus test votes! Obama skipped four of those fifteen but selected the pro-environment vote on all of the other eleven. Hilary Clinton also skipped four of the fifteen and also voted correctly on the eleven others. That McCain failed to show up for those LCV litmus votes is not good news. McCain's lifetime LCV congressional voting record is a frightening 24%. Obama's is 86% and Clinton's

Endangered Species at the Crossroads

87%.

U.S. presidents appoint the Secretaries of Interior and other cabinet secretaries. The Interior Secretary has control over the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This includes oversight of the listing of endangered species and designation of their critical habitats. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed in 1973 during President Lyndon Johnson's Administration. Since passage the actual number of endangered species listed per year has usually followed along party lines: Johnson (D) 36.5 species listed/yr., Nixon (R) 9.8/yr., Ford (R) 21/yr., Carter (D) 28/yr., Reagan (R) 7/yr., 1st Bush (R) 58.5/yr., Clinton (D) 65/yr., 2nd Bush (R) 7.6/yr.

What has been McCain's record on endangered species? McCain aggressively backed deforestation by the UofA's Mt. Graham telescope project despite a plummeting federally endangered squirrel population of as few as 100 individuals striving for survival in a unique, irreplaceable old-growth forest.

On March 16, 1995 McCain voted to prohibit adding any new species to the endangered species list. A year later in March 1996 he again voted against any ESA listing. He has

voted against ESA enforcement on other occasions as well.

The U.S. Secretary of Interior, appointed by the President, oversees the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which oversees ESA listing and critical habitat designation for endangered species. Interior also oversees the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (dambuilding), Offshore Oil and Gas drilling, Office of Surface Mining, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Multiple use mining, grazing, logging and other commercial developments are allowed and regulated on those public lands

The U.S. president also appoints the head of the Department of Agriculture. That Secretary has oversight on all logging, grazing and mining on U.S. Forest Service lands. Hence, the next U.S. president, through his appointees to head the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, guides and controls policy on all public lands overseen by the USFS, BLM, USFWS (which includes U.S. Wildlife Refuges), and National Park Service.

In 2005 McCain introduced land-swap legislation into the

U.S. Senate to facilitate a copper mine on 1000 acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land. McCain's legislation would exempt outright federal oversight of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Besides circumvention of NEPA, arguably our nation's strongest and most important environmental protection law, it would vitiate USFS oversight of (1) the National Historic Preservation Act (namely Native American sacred, cultural and historic sites) and (2) Endangered Species Act protections (to a local, endemic endangered species of cactus at the mine).

Recently, on August 11, 2008 Bush announced he would weaken the Endangered Species Act by taking protection of wildlife from seasoned agency scientists and put it into the hands of political appointees and other unqualified individuals in developmental agencies outside the USFWS. McCain has refused to comment to reporters on what he thought of Bush's Administrative Action. Obama said he would throw out the plan if elected. For quotes by your MAS conservation chairperson and others see the Sept.-Oct. 2008, (p. 60) issue of NAS' Audubon magazine.

Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

JUNE, JULY, & AUGUST 2008

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), many observers (m. ob.), Morgan City Wash (MCW), Painted Rock Dam (PRD).

A pair of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde, 5 July, represented the farthest west record for the species in Maricopa County (TC,BIs). This may have been the same pair noted near Buckeye 22 June (MHe). Two more were observed along 99th Ave. s. of Broadway 27 July (MHe). Three Fulvous-Whistling-Ducks (casual visitors) were photographed at GWR 11 June (BGri et al.). The Ross's Goose, reported at ASU Research Park in the spring, was still present there 6 June (MMo), providing only the second June record for the county. The Ross's Goose (probably the same individual) was back at Chaparral Park by 22 Aug (DY). A female Gadwall, a rare summer visitor, was observed at GWR 8 June until 22 July (MMo) and six were counted at PRD 21 June to 5 July (TC,MHe). Two male Blue-winged Teal, uncommon in June, were seen at the Lower River Rd. ponds 18 June (MHe) and two more were reported at BTA 22 June (DKr).

A N. Shoveler, an irregular summer visitor, was observed at

the Watermelon Rd. ponds in Gila Bend 5 - 12 July (TC,BIs,KR). An early Green-winged Teal, rare in summer, was reported at GWR 27 & 29 July (MMo). Higher than usual numbers of Redheads, usually irregular summer visitors, were found below PRD – eight on 21 June (TC,MHe), 14 on 26 July (PL), and numbers on 8 Aug (BGro); six more were reported at Casa Grande, Pinal Co. 17 July (DJ). The female White-winged Scoter, that spent the winter and spring at Saguaro Lake, was still present there 2 June (MMo), providing the first summer record for the state. There are only a few summer records of Common Merganser for Maricopa County, so of interest was a female on the Verde River, n. of Needle Rock 17 July (TSu).

Eared Grebes are rarely recorded in summer in Maricopa Co., so unusual were the five seen at the Gila Bend Power Plant Pond (including an albino individual) and the three below PRD 21 June (TC,MHe); three were still present at Gila Bend 12 July and one spent the summer on Fountain Hills Lake (KR). Five Eared Grebes were also reported at Casa Grande 17 July (DJ). Five Am. White Pelicans, rare summer visitors, were seen at PRD 29 June and one was still present there 5 July (KR): seven were reported at Paloma 8 Aug (BGro) and by 23 Aug the numbers at PRD had risen to 55 (CBa).

A juvenile Brown Pelican was reported on Tempe Town Lake 5 July through the period into August (MSc,MWeb).

An Am. Bittern was found at GWR on the very early date of 22 Aug (MMo); there were no previous August records for Maricopa County. A Little Blue Heron, discovered at the Lower River Rd. ponds 15 June (TC,MHe), provided only the second June record for Maricopa County. Seventeen Cattle Egrets in breeding plumage were observed in Avondale 5 July and were suspected of breeding there. (MHe). Two hundred White-faced Ibis counted in Avondale 27 July (MHe), was a large number for this early date. A White-faced/Glossy Ibis hybrid was observed at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 23 – 24 Aug (KR,DPO,MMo).

A White-tailed Kite, a rare and irregular summer visitor was observed near Gila Bend 26 July (PL). Early returning N. Harriers were seen at the Rousseau Sod Farm - one on 10 Aug (CBa), two at Paloma 23 Aug (CBa), and one at Arlington 24 Aug (MMo). The pair of Gray Hawks at HRP continued to be seen and heard through the period (MHa,MWeb). An adult Swainson's Hawk was found at Paloma Ranch 21 June (TC,MHe); there are very few June records for the county. Swainson's Hawks are not usually seen in migration until mid-

August, so unusual were the high numbers reported in July: 30 at Paloma Ranch 11 July (MHe) and 100 near Gila Bend 12 July (KR) increasing to 300 by 19 July (KR). One was seen in N. Mt. Park 8 July (MHa). An adult and a juvenile Zone-tailed Hawk (rare summer residents) were observed at BTA 13 & 17 July (DPe,ES).

Individual Clapper Rails were heard calling near Gillespie Dam 23 Aug (CBa), and at Arlington 24 Aug (MMo). Virginia Rails, heard in a marsh on Sisson Rd. near PRD 5 July, either nested there or were very early returning fall/winter visitors (TC,BIs); the species is a rare local summer resident in the county. Soras heard in the same marsh 5 July were very early (TC,BIs) and provided only the second July record for the county. Another early returning Sora was observed at GWR 22 July (MMo).

Am. Avocets were found nesting in a new area – at PRD 5 July (TC,BIs). The species nested at GWR again where young were seen the first week in June (RDi,RWz). An unusual concentration of six Solitary Sandpipers was reported at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 24 Aug (TC,MHe). Two Greater Yellowlegs were observed at PRD on the early date of 29 June (KR) and provided only the second June record for the county. Two early returning Willets were seen at PRD and one was

seen at Paloma Ranch 29 June (KR). Individual Willets were later observed at PRD 8, 23, & 24 Aug (BGro,CBa,TC,MHe), at the sludge pond on Citrus Valley Rd. 23 Aug (CBa), at Paloma 24 Aug (TC,MHe), and at Veterans Oasis Park in Chandler 24 Aug (BGri). A Marbled Godwit, an uncommon migrant, was found in Arlington Valley 19 July (KR), two were seen at Paloma 8 Aug (BGro), and one was reported at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 26 Aug (MSc).

Six Semipalmated Sandpipers (rare transients) were found at PRD 8 Aug (BGro), two were seen there 23 Aug (CBa), and one was still present 24 Aug (TC,MHe); two were also found at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 24 Aug (MMo). Individual juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers (rare transients) were discovered at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 3, 23, & 24 Aug (KR,DPO,MMo,TC,MHe), at ponds in Arlington Valley 4 Aug (KR), and at the Gila Bend sewage ponds 23 Aug (CBa). A Long-billed Dowitcher was seen at PRD on the slightly early date of 12 July (KR). Seventy-five Wilson's Phalaropes counted at PRD 21 June (TC,MHe) and 100 counted there 29 June (KR) were high numbers for so early in the migration. Even higher numbers were recorded in July: 400 at PRD 5 & 12 July (TC) and a new state high of 600 there 28 July (PL). An early Red-necked Phalarope seen at PRD 29 June (KR), provided

only the second June record for the county; another (or the same) individual seen at PRD 12 July was also earlier than usual (KR).

A second winter California Gull (rare in summer) was observed in a canal in Palo Verde 15 June (TC,MHe). Three California Gulls were found at PRD 29 June (KR) and remained at least until 5 July (TC,BIs); two were still present there 26 July (MHe) and 8 Aug (BGro); one was reported at the Gila Bend sewage ponds 23 Aug (CBa). A Least Tern (a casual transient) was discovered at Paloma Ranch 22 June (MHe). Individual Black Terns (uncommon transients) were observed at PRD 8 & 23 Aug (BGro,CBa), at the Gila Bend Power Plant Pond 23 Aug (CBa), and at the Watermelon Rd. pond, Gila Bend 24 Aug (TC,MHe). An adult Common Tern (a rare transient) was found at PRD on the early date of 21 - 22 June (TC,MHe); there were no previous June records for the county.

A Com. Ground-Dove, heard calling at MCW 23 Aug, was a surprise this far north, so late in the season (TC). A migrant Yellow-billed Cuckoo was heard in a Scottsdale neighborhood 20 - 21 June (JBa); the species is rarely found in suburban areas. A Magnificent Hummingbird, a casual transient) was observed

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Field Observations

Continued from page 13

at BTA 17 July 17 (ES). An adult male Broad-tailed Hummingbird (a rare fall transient in the lowlands) was found in a yard in Gilbert 13 – 20 Aug (CW).

Three Willow Flycatchers were seen and heard singing at HRP 6 June (RWd,LHat); the species nested there and fledged three young ten years ago. One Willow Flycatcher (an uncommon transient) was observed at Paloma 23 Aug (CBa) and three were found at MCW 23 Aug (TC). A silent “Western Flycatcher” (probably Pacific-slope) was seen at MCW on the early date of 4 July (TC); there were no previous county records before mid-July. Up to three Brown-crested Flycatchers were observed in atypical habitat in a Scottsdale neighborhood from 23 June to mid-August (JBa). Also in atypical habitat were individual Brown-crested Flycatchers at Paloma 19 July (KR) and at PRD 26 July (PL). Several family groups of Brown-crested Flycatchers were still being seen at MCW on the late date of 16 Aug (TC). One of the Tropical Kingbirds at HRP was seen there 13 July (MHe).

Bell’s Vireo parents were seen still feeding young at MCW on the late date of 16 Aug (TC). A Com. Raven (unusual in the lowlands) was observed in downtown Phoenix 29 Aug (MWeb). A male Purple Martin (rare in summer) was seen flying over Ayer Lake,

BTA 25 June (RWz) and a female was observed in the same area 28 June (JBa). Six Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, found at MCW 23 Aug, were new for that area (TC,BIs).

A male Blackpoll Warbler (accidental in summer anywhere in Arizona) was discovered at Vista del Camino Park, Scottsdale 3 July (RE) and provided the tenth county record, but only the second for July. A female Am. Redstart (an uncommon transient) was found at Seven Springs 30 Aug (KA,BIs). A Yellow-breasted Chat was rescued from a pool in s. Chandler 29 July (PH); the species is infrequently reported in suburban areas, including during migration

Unusual was the Green-tailed Towhee that was found at BTA on the very late date of 8 June (KA et al.). An adult male Cassin’s Sparrow (a casual and irregular summer visitor to Maricopa Co.) was discovered singing in a field in Gila Bend on the early date of 5 July (TC,BIs); there were no previous records before 14 July. In Pinal County, a singing male Cassin’s Sparrow was found along Queen Creek, w. of BTA 15 July and another singing male was found along Queen Creek e. of BTA 19 July (CT). A White-throated Sparrow, photographed in a Tolleson yard 3 July (BGro), provided the first summer record for Maricopa

County and only the second for the state.

An adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, found on Mt. Ord 18 July (D&RHa), represented the first to be recorded away from the Lower Sonoran Zone in Maricopa County. A young male Indigo Bunting (a rare summer visitor) was observed at HRP 6 June (RWd,LHat). Another Indigo Bunting (rare as a transient as well) was found at Arlington 24 Aug (MMo). A singing male and female Varied Bunting (rare and local summer residents) were found w. of BTA 14 July; another male and female were found farther w. of BTA 15 & 19 July; two additional singing males and a probable female were observed on Arnett Creek, s. of BTA 19 July (CT).

Observers: Kathe Anderson, Charles Babbitt, Jack Bartley, Troy Corman, Rich Ditch, Rasmus Elleby, Brendon Grice, Bill Grossi, Debbie & Ron Haaseth, Paul Halesworth, Michael Hartley, Liz Hatcher, Melanie Herring, Brian Ison, Doug Jenness, Dione Krpa, Paul Lehman, Mike Moore, Dave Pearson, Dave Powell, Kurt Radamaker, Myron Scott, Ed Strong, Tice Supplee, Carl Tomoff, Magill Weber, Cindy West, Russ Widner, Robert Witzeman, Daniela Yellan.

Mount Graham--August 16--

The MAS trip to Mt. Graham was awesome. We had Cyndi West, Richard and Karen Kaiser and three government employees who were biologists, silviculturalists, etc. and they were all interested in botany, the life zones, and all of the wildflowers, birds, tree species, and butterflies at all the multiple ascending elevations of that fourth highest mountain in AZ. Good birds seen inc. Hermit Warbler, Zone-tailed Hawk. We spent some really rewarding time photographing and identifying wildflowers and butterflies and one biologist who came, a USFS employee from the Safford office, helped us encounter two Mt. Graham Red Squirrels-- which both Cyndi and I were able to photograph. There are only some three hundred of these endangered squirrels extant in the world.

The cone crop on the spruce and fir conifer species (which is the winter food supply of the acutely endangered Mt. Graham Red Squirrel) has sustained a very critical and serious failure this year -- due to a killing spring frost -- so the squirrels will be in desperate straights this winter and next year, as there will be no food for them to place in their underground cone storage "middens" this fall. Many will die during the coming winter of starvation. Captive breeding of the species is being seriously considered. Conservationists should demand removing the UA telescopes and the long road UA built thru the critical endangered Mt. Graham Red Squirrel habitat to access their summit scopes. It passes through critical spruce-fir (Mt. Graham Red Squirrel) forest habitat. The UA astronomers ablated and destroyed it at the summit and along their access road to the summit of Mt. Graham. UA claims their summit telescopes only take up 8 acres, but hundreds of acres of this squirrel's critical spruce-

fir old growth habitat was destroyed due to backfires set by firefighters to protect the UA telescopes during the last forest fire (some 5? years ago) which occurred on Mt. Graham.

The renewal of the UA/USFS 20-year telescope permit comes up this year (for renewal) and that permit should be terminated and astronomy done elsewhere where habitat of an extremely endangered squirrel species will not be further impacted. Furthermore the site's topography is very marginal to mediocre telescope visibility or viewing (by their own studies) due to that summit site's turbulent shifting winds and air patterns. UA was impetuous in pushing their telescopes before they did their science homework -- which studies would have revealed the marginal/mediocre visibility at that mountain.

MAS had at least three interest, but obscurely patterned skippers -- which I'm still trying to identify from my photos -- and there many beautiful butterflies (non-skippers) nectaring off the wildflowers which abounded in the high altitude meadows on Mt. Graham. Janet will help me compile the butterfly and wildflower list from my many photos. It was a spectacular wildflower and butterfly trip. And of course birds were largely silent at this time of the year up there. -- Bob Witzeman

Page Springs--September 6--On this warm early September day the blackberries along the trail were ripe, but the birds were quiet. It was the reptiles and mammals who had a starring role on this particular field trip.

One of our participants spotted a Gila Monster, dead unfortunately, alongside the road between I-10 and Cornville. At Bubbling Ponds Hatchery a Bobcat, which was causing a panic

among a Chipmunk clan, streaked right past us. A Coyote was the other noteworthy mammal recorded.

This field trip encompassed the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Page Springs Fish Hatchery, an IBA (Important Bird Area) sponsored by Northern Arizona Audubon Society immediately adjacent to the hatchery, and the Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery, also operated by AG&FD, a short distance up the road--actually three very different sorts of habitats, along the road which criss-crosses a meandering lower Oak Creek, between Cornville and Highway 89A.

Actually the birding wasn't half bad. I maintain that the Zone-tailed Hawk we spotted behind the Page Springs Hatchery was not the same bird that I called a Black Hawk, which flew over us later at Bubbling Ponds, but I always leave it up to the participants to decide what they want to count and what they don't. The only warbler actually seen well enough to identify was a MacGillvray's, although we clearly heard the vocal gymnastics of a Yellow-breasted Chat.

We identified a number of our more colorful birds such as a Blue Grosbeak, a Northern Cardinal, a Bullock's Oriole, and a Pyrrhuloxia. Other interesting birds on our list for the day included American Robin, Black-headed Grosbeak, Osprey, Belted Kingfisher and the ever range expanding Eurasian Collared Dove.

At the overgrown with cattails pond at Bubbling Ponds we were able to get several Sora's to respond to our tape, but, sadly, no Virginia Rail this year. -- Herb Fibel

Observers were Sandra Bondy, Richard Kaiser, Kevin Brown, Linda Martin and Bob and Ellen Cassano

Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

The commonalities here are the thin, pointed bills, the speckled and stippled plumage which looks like it would provide good camouflage for these birds, and the relatively short, stripey tails. Bill shape, often overlooked, is often the best indicator of diet which is, in turn, a good indicator of habitat. These bills don't look like they evolved for crushing seeds and berries or for capturing large insects, so we can eliminate families like sparrows and finches, flycatchers and tanagers. These aren't warbler bills either. Too long and thin and, of course, the warblers have more contrasting plumage patterns. These have to be wrens.

The wren family is, for a lot of birders, a favorite. There are a lot of things to like—loud, interesting, and distinctive songs; furtive yet busy life styles; diminutive size, and curious natures, all in a relatively tame family that, for the most part, has adapted well to life around people and their habitation. To my knowledge, Sedge Wren has never been recorded in Arizona, but our other eight wren species have been, and seven of these can be seen at one location, Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park (BTA) during the winter, all on the same day if the stars are aligned properly.

A)—Good photo, easy bird

Our first wren is showing off three of the most distinguishing features of its family—the protectively patterned upperparts plumage, the barred tail, and the cocked position of that tail, particularly noteworthy in the smaller species of the family. In this photo none of these characteristics is particularly eye catching, but there are two others that definitely are, and they should put us on the path to proper identification. This bird's bill is very long and its throat is very white.

Only three of our wrens, Carolina, Bewick's, and Canyon, sport a white throat. Two of those three, Carolina and Bewick's, have long, prominent superciliums (eyebrows or the distinctive stripes above the eye). In fact, our quiz bird is the only member of the wren family which shows no hint of a supercilium. This is a Canyon Wren, and the notoriously long, slightly decurved bill of this species, proportionately the longest in the family, is a adaptation which helps it probe the depths of narrow nooks and crannies in its rock world in search of insects and spiders, the latter its most favored prey item.

If I had been granted a vote for state bird of Arizona, there is no doubt this species

would have gotten it. This is, after all, the Grand Canyon State, and there is more Canyon Wren habitat—deep, watered canyons, cliff faces, boulder fields, rock walls rising from densely vegetated washes, even stone residences—in this state than in any other in the bird's range. And what species' song more perfectly reflects the echoed, vertical world of our state's canyons than the clear, ringing whistle of this species as it cascades down the musical scale like water or stones descending into the depths of those canyons.

When you visit Boyce-Thompson look, or listen, for our should-have-been state bird where the canyon drops off beneath the Picketpost Mansion or where Queen Creek pinches the Main Trail up against the rock ledges just east of its intersection with the High Trail. This Canyon Wren was photographed in the rocks just west of the Herb Garden, December 2, 2006.

B)—Good photo, difficult bird

Even by the standards of the wren family where tails are proportionately short and often cocked, our second quiz bird is showing a very short tail held almost perpendicular to its body. We see the wren bill, thin and pointed, but it too seems very short. There is a faint, but distinct, supercilium, which means it probably isn't white, and the plump bodied, large headed jizz (general impression, size and shape) so characteristic of the wren family is all the more pronounced here because of the attenuated tail and bill. Every feather on the body seems to be spotted, speckled, stippled, or striped. If this bird were encountered on the forest floor or in a wood pile, the eye would surely pass right over it.

Let's start eliminating family members. This is obviously not a Canyon Wren and Sedge Wren doesn't make it to Arizona. Carolina, Bewick's, Marsh, and our state bird, Cactus Wren, sport bright, white eyebrows. That leaves us only three candidates, House Wren, Winter Wren, and Rock Wren. The latter shows a hint of a supercilium as in this photo, but it is a dark over light plumaged bird, a specialty of BTA to be sure, but one that doesn't match this photo at all.

House or Winter? Oh, are House Wrens and Winter Wrens even seen at BTA? Well, yes, in the winter. My personal earliest date for House Wren at BTA is October 6, and I have a note in my birdlog for October 31, 1990 which says House Wrens were "all over the place." My earliest BTA date for

Winter Wren is November 15, my latest January 19, although I'm sure those who go more often have beaten those early and late dates by perhaps a month and two months respectively. Long story short, House Wrens are present in numbers at BTA every winter and breed as close as the Pinal Mountains south of Globe, and Winter Wren has become an almost annual winter visitor at BTA.

So . . . is our second quiz bird House or Winter? They are the two members of the family most difficult to separate, the only two members of the troglodyte genus. Here are the three most distinguishing features in decreasing order of reliability. Winter wren has a much shorter tail, described in some field guides as "stubby." Winter Wren has more prominent barring on the belly. Winter Wren is darker overall, both above and below. This final feature is problematical in the southwest where the mountain subspecies of House Wren, at one time considered a separate species called Brown-throated Wren, has rufescent underparts like the Winter Wren, noticeably darker than the lighter, grayish, more common western subspecies. This Winter Wren was photographed along Queen Creek at the bottom of the hill beneath the Clevenger House, November 21, 1999.

C)—Good photo, difficult bird

One of the difficulties with identifying our third bird is that it is creeping down the trunk of a standing tree like a creeper. But it's not a creeper. Creepers creep up, not down. This is a wren with a white supercilium and quite distinct, vertical barring (as opposed to the standard wren horizontal barring on its tail) on its upper back and wing tertials, but its scapulars and underparts are unmarked, creating a very bold pattern of barred and unbarred areas rather unique for the wren family. This pattern is, in fact, shared only by Sedge Wren and Marsh Wren, the only two members of the *cistothorus* genus. We'd expect to see neither in this position on a tree, let alone in a tree at all.

This Marsh Wren was photographed gleaning insects from the interstices in the bark of a tree on the south side of Ayer Lake at BTA, January 10, 1999. Marsh Wrens nest in the reeds around Ayer Lake and often overwinter, joining the six other wren family members possible on any given winter day at BTA. It's a great birding challenge. Get out to Boyce-Thompson and see if you can find all seven of its winter wrens on one day.

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count

Count for Fun, Count for the Future
February 13-16, 2009

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY-Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

"The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It's a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy

nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future."

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards-whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these "citizen scientists" collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

"The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology

director, John Fitzpatrick. "With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade."

Each year, in addition to entering their tallies, participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the popular online gallery. Participants in the 2009 count are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube; some will also be featured on the GBBC web site. Visit www.birdcount.org to learn more.

Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473), or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, ext 16.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

AnAnytime,AnywhereCelebrationofNatureintheCity

Introducing a New and Fun
Way for Traveling Birders to
Save Money

Glen Unruh says he's "never met a birder he didn't like," and he wants to meet them all over the world. That is why, along with his wife Jennifer, he developed the website, BirdersHostingBirders.com, an online network of traveling birders willing to open their homes to other traveling birders.

The concept for this site was developed over several years as Glen and Jennifer traveled North America pursuing their shared passions of travel, birding, and meeting new people. Usually, they stay in bed-and-breakfasts because they enjoy sharing travel experiences with other travelers. As with most birders, no matter the reason for their travels, they always manage to fit in some birding, wherever they are.

Their site, BirdersHostingBirders.com, allows birders from around the world to connect with each other to share resources, particularly a place to stay while they are traveling. Members of BirdersHostingBirders.com agree to host other members in their homes at no charge in exchange for the opportunity to stay with other members when they travel.

With fuel costs skyrocketing, travel has become much more expensive for birders. Unruh feels BirdersHostingBirders.com will provide a valuable resource to birders around the world, allowing them to save substantially on their travel costs. For example, birders who spend \$125-\$150 per night on lodging could save \$375-600 on a three to four-day trip by staying with other members of BirdersHostingBirders.com. The cost savings are enticing, says Unruh, but he also feels that birders will enjoy meeting

other birders and sharing their favorite local birding spots. Unruh has been passionate about birding since he was a young boy and introduced his wife to his hobby when they first met. Jennifer is not as committed a birder as her husband, but she loves the outdoors and finds that birding just adds to her enjoyment of nature and travel.

"We just went live last month so our numbers are small, but as the birding community discovers this opportunity to save money and connect with birders around the world, it will grow quickly", says Unruh.

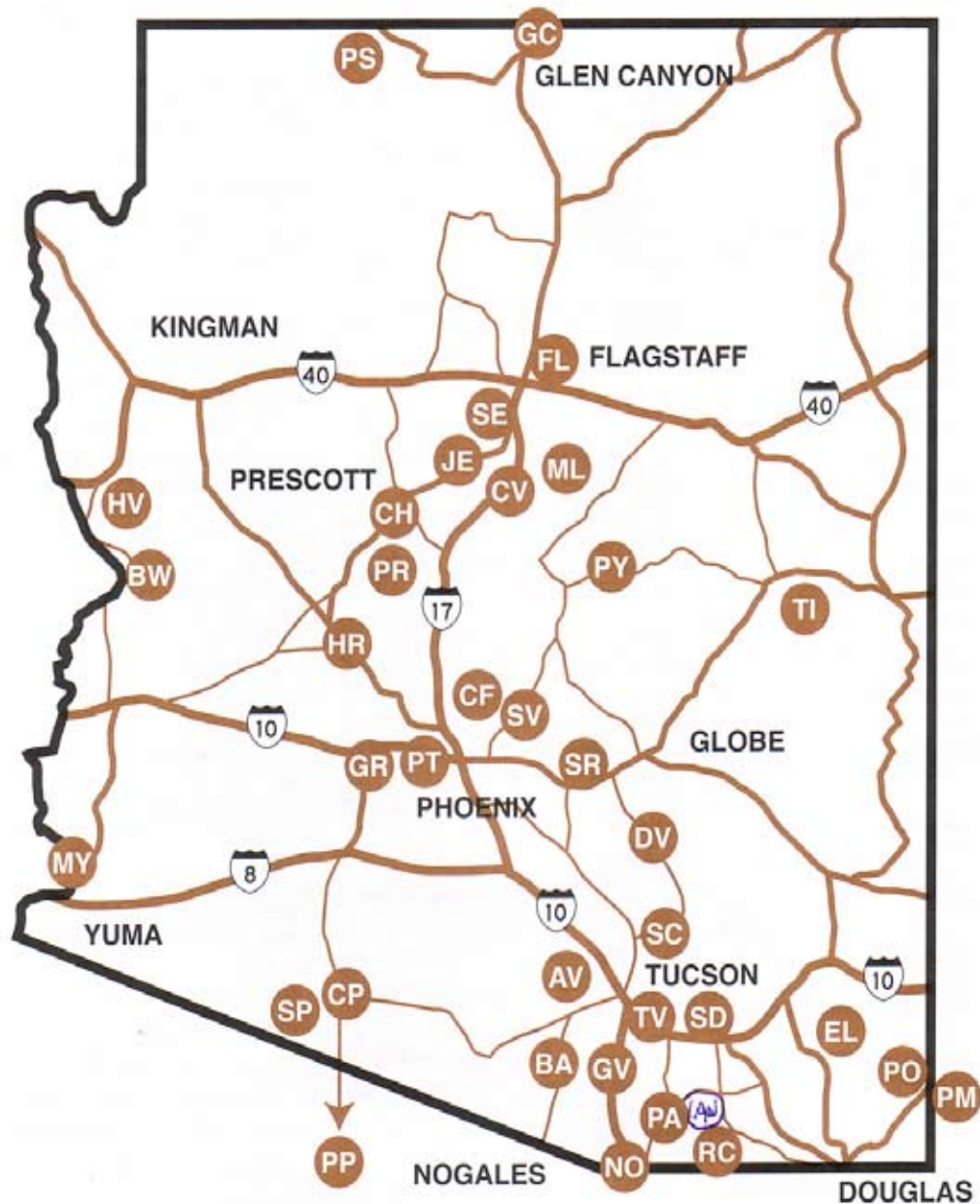
For additional information on BirdersHostingBirders.com, contact Glen Unruh or visit <http://www.birdershostingbirders.com/> or 651-454-5360 or <mailto:glen@birdershostingbirders.com>

Arizona (& vicinity) Christmas Bird Count Map 2008-2009

cbc map

christmas bird count

Arizona (& vicinity) Christmas Bird Count Map 2006-2007



Arizona Christmas Bird Count Schedule 2008-2009

Walter Thurber

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers from across North America and beyond will take to the field during one calendar day between December 14 and January 5 to record every bird species and individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle. These records now comprise an extensive ornithological database that enables monitoring of winter bird populations and the overall health of the environment.

Participants are typically assigned to teams based on their bird identification skill level and endurance. Many counts hold a compilation dinner at the end of the day where results are tabulated and stories shared. A \$5.00 participation fee defrays a portion of the cost of tabulating and publishing the overall count results. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one that interests you and contact the compiler for more information.

Date	Day	Code	Count Name	Compiler	Phone	E-Mail
12/06	Sa		Gila River Indian Community	Gila River, DEQ	520-562-2234	MUST register
12/14	Su	JE	Jerome-Cottonwood	Betsy Feinberg	928-203-0676 x11	azbirder@gmail.com
12/14	Su	ML	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	928-526-1022	elaimorr@npgcable.com
12/14	Su	PA	Patagonia	Abbie Zeltzer	520-604-6320	amindajar@gmail.com
12/15	Mo	EL	Elfrida	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/15	Mo	SV	Salt-Verde Rivers	Kurt Radamaker	480-837-2446	kurtrad@mexicobirding.com
12/18	Th	PR	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626	tomoff@northlink.com
12/19	Fr	PS	Pipe Spring Natl. Monument	Andrea Bornemeier	928-643-7105	andrea_bornemeier@nps.gov
12/19	Fr	SD	Saint David	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/20	Sa	CP	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Curt McCasland	520-387-4992	curtis_mccasland@fws.gov
12/20	Sa	AV	Avra Valley	Mary Lou Cole	520-578-0114	birdingnana@msn.com
12/20	Sa	HR	Hassayampa River	Vanessa Montgomery	623-465-0012	hassayampacbc@hotmail.com
12/20	Sa	MY	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Henry Detwiler	928-210-6474	henrydetwiler@earthlink.net
12/20	Sa	NO	Nogales	Michael Bissontz	520-577-8778	seetrogon@comcast.net/
12/20	Sa	PY	Payson	Dave Hallock	303-258-3672	eldoradh@rmi.net
12/20	Sa	SC	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	520-296-5629	batesd@cox.net
12/20	Sa	TI	Timber Mesa	Jimmy Videle	928-337-2466	moonrise@wmonline.com
12/21	Su	CH	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-636-4916	russell.duerksen@azbar.org
12/21	Su	TV	Tucson Valley	Larry Liese	520-743-3520	larryliese@prodigy.net
12/22	Mo	PT	Phoenix-Tres Rios	David Powell	602-441-5508	vireo@vireos.com
12/27	Sa	FL	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Terry Blows	928-774-8028	terence.blows@nau.edu
12/27	Sa	PO	Portal	Larry Gates	520-558-1020	hummers@vtc.net
12/27	Sa	RC	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	520-803-0221	tedmouras@mindspring.com
12/28	Su	GV	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Michael Marsden	520-269-6240	birdanza@cox.net
12/28	Su	SE	Sedona	Dottie Hook	928-204-1894	dottiehook1@aol.com
12/29	Mo	HV	Havas NWR	DeeDee DeLorenzo	928-758-2707	poncho@citlink.net
12/30	Tu	BW	Bill Williams River NWR	Kathleen Blair	928-667-4144	kathleen_blair@fws.gov
12/30	Tu	GR	Gila River	Troy Corman	602-482-6187	aplomado@cox.net
1/2	Fr	BA	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-823-4251 x108	bonnie_swarbrick@fws.gov
1/2	Fr	CF	Carefree	Walter Thurber	480-483-6450	wathurber@cox.net
1/3	Sa	AW	Appleton-Whittell	Robert Weissler	520-803-0794	weissler@aves.org
1/3	Sa	CV	Camp Verde	Anita MacFarlane	928-282-4063	ajmac@sedona.net
1/3	Sa	DV	Dudleyville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	d_jenness@hotmail.com
1/5	Mo	GC	Glen Canyon	John Spence	928-608-6267	john_spence@nps.gov
1/5	Mo	SR	Superior	Cynthia Donald	80-283-4515	planres@earthlink.net

Other Nearby Counts

12/20	Sa	PP	Puerto Penasco, Sonora, MX	Steve Ganley	480-830-5538	sganley@cox.net
12/28	Su	PM	Peloncillo Mountains, NM	Tony Godfrey	520-558-3350	kingbird@vtc.net

Monthly Meetings--*November meeting is canceled*

First Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced, September through April, 7:30 p.m. Our meeting place is Dorrance Hall, at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), except for our annual banquet in May, the location to be announced. The DBG is located at 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, Arizona. This is approximately 1/4 mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. For a map, please see the DBG website at www.dbg.org/.

Dorrance Hall is located just off the main parking lot and entry to the DBG. There will be signs directing you to the meeting place. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at www.maricopa-audubon.org. Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at Rolling Hills 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Membership Information

There are two ways to become a Maricopa Audubon member and to receive the Cactus Wren*dition by mail:

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert or Chandler, when National Audubon Society receives your check made payable to National Audubon Society and your membership application, you will be assigned to Maricopa Audubon Society, or you can send your check payable to National Audubon Society and your National Audubon Society membership application to Jack Follett, membership chair, and he will send it on in to National Audubon for you, or
2. By becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and you will not receive the Audubon magazine or any of the other "benefits" of National Audubon membership, but you will receive a one-year subscription to the Cactus Wren*dition. "Friends" contribution categories are: Anna's Hummingbird-\$20; Verdin-\$35-\$99; LeConte's Thrasher-\$100-\$249; Cactus Wren-\$250-\$999; Harris's Hawk-\$1,000-\$9,999* and California Condor-\$10,000+* *These levels include a signed, framed, photograph by Jim Burns of your designated raptor. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Jack Follett, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated discounts. (If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the Cactus Wren*dition is to become a "Friend".)

For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or e-mail CHADD@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or e-mail Jack Follett.

Submissions

Copy for The Cactus Wren*dition must be received by the editor by e-mail, (may be on computer diskette, or typed and double-spaced; however, this is not preferred) by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. E-mail to: Cactus Wren*dition Editor, Deva Burns. devaburns@aol.com

Opinions

The opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of the National Audubon Society or the Maricopa Audubon Society.

Reprinting of material

Unless stated explicitly in the article, material in The Cactus Wren*dition may be reprinted on other newsletters as long as the material is credited to the original author and to The Cactus Wren*dition.

This publication is printed on recycled paper.



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